

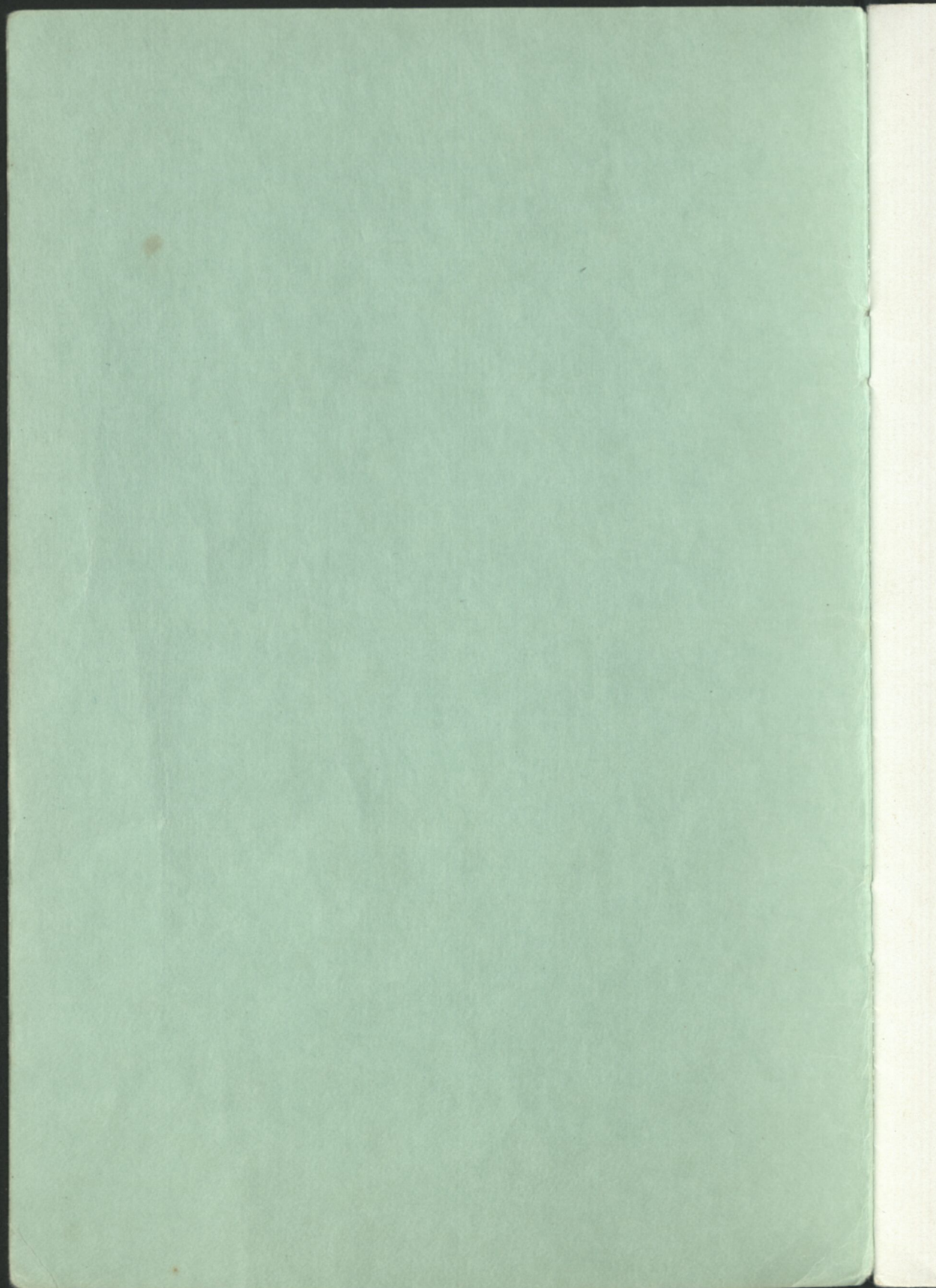
M. Fawcett B.  
(her copy)

# 'SCONSET HEYDAY

by

Margaret Fawcett Barnes







Property of  
Margaret Fawcett Barnes  
Rosemary

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by

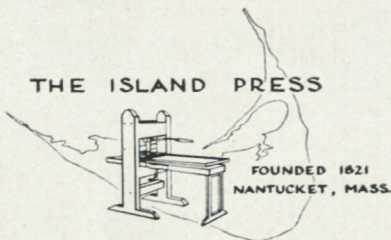
Margaret Fawcett Barnes

Siasconset

Mass.



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Childhood Recollections of Siasconset  
and The Actors' Colony in Early 1900s

by

Margaret Georgia Fawcett

In Memory of

My mother and father



## FOREWORD

Siasconset started with the Indians. They could spot a clean ocean breeze and good fishing-grounds as well as their white counterparts, who came later. The first white settlers, in 1659, found the largest band of Indians on the Eastern shore of Nantucket Island, near what is now known as the village of Siasconset. The Indians named it from a word meaning "at the elbow," (according to one interpretation) which describes the shore line as it curves from Tom Nevers' Head, north to the Squam shore. The sea came closer to the bank then, as the land has made out during the last three centuries. The Indians pinned their teepees to the high ground, which they tended, planting a patch of maize and letting their sheep graze over the rolling hillocks. The southwest land breeze must have blown then as now across wild rose-vines in June, and spicy clethra bushes in July, perfuming the air; while the sea on a calm day whispered and sighed as it does still, breathing in and out with the tide. On a windy day with so much sea and so much shore, the surf pierces the quiet and when northeast storms rage, it pounds incessantly sending great licks of water up into the beach grass. Day and night, this accompaniment of sea-sounds overspread their lives, as it does ours today, giving a rhythmic cadence to daily living, linking us with the vibrating universe. Put it any way you want to, 'Sconset does have a special quality that holds the heart, once it has caught the imagination.

After the Indians of the island were decimated by an unknown plague, and by other ill-effects of civilization, the white men from the Town began driving their wagons across the rutted roads from Nantucket to the eastern shore for the deep-sea fishing. In spring and autumn the cod and bass come, and in the summer-time the blue-fish. 'Sconset was called a "fishing-stage" at first, and, as the drive was long, and the fishermen weren't likely to make a good catch and be able to return home in one day, they began putting up small shacks, mostly along the edge of the bluff. Since it could be cold in May and September, this called for a chimney and some kind of stove, with an iron "spider" or skillet for cooking, a port-hole in the doorway for light and a bunk. That, and a board hinged to a wall for a table and a stool or two was all they needed, besides their dories on the beach below. Until the wives decided to come along too, for an outing! To the already small shacks they added even smaller lean-to's, which looked like warts, and which were called just that. One "wart" with bunks for the "missus" and children, another for a cook stove and a few shelves, to start with. More came later, of various sizes, as "outings" in 'Sconset grew longer. Eventually the beach widened enough to give space for shacks and small houses below the bank, where they were more protected. This they called Codfish Park. Later on the more substantial families of Nantucket caught onto the idea and built more elaborate homes



on the Main Street of the hamlet, for "chowder parties" and for what now would be called "week-ends in the country"; which soon led to the wife and children spending their whole summers there.



Looking north along South Bluff, at corner of Pochick Street

By the eighteen nineties the Town of Nantucket was beginning to be known, in New England at least, as a cool spot to spend a summer. With no air-conditioning on the Mainland, and malaria prevalent, the village of Siasconset, with its cool, unadulterated sea-breeze, could also be an ideal place for vacationing, if any one knew about it. A Mr. Edward F. Underhill decided to do some advertising and developing, in more or less the modern manner. He had a brochure printed and mailed off-Island, while he undertook to build, not a few rentable houses, but three streets of them! And it came about that he had the right idea, city people would come to Siasconset to lead the simple life as the fishermen had. So he copied the fishermen's houses, warts and all! And what were known as the "Underhill Cottages" for years still line the sides of Pochick, Evelyn and Lily Streets. They are all privately owned now and have been somewhat changed, but originally were almost exact replicas of the early fishermen's homes on Broadway and Front Street. No room larger than 7 or 10 feet square, bedrooms even smaller, eaved with a slope about four feet from the ground, tiny windows, modeled after ship's cabins.



In several there was a ladder leading from center living-room to an attic room where the children could bunk. If an extra room was needed, Mr. Underhill had that figured out too. By building a separate room on wheels, which was hauled by a large mule, it could be attached for the summer to whichever house required it.

The cottages were comfortably enough furnished in simple Victorian manner and aesthetically appealing enough to attract a few writers and artists from Boston, who heard they were not expensive. They told other friends in the artistic world; a few actors came, and found this out-of-the-way spot the answer to their then enforced long vacations, and gradually they told more stage friends. But, it should be made clear that the actors and their families who came in those early days did not set out to form an "Actors' Colony," as it is referred to now. It just happened that way! — gradually growing from word-of-mouth communication, in the various companies and clubs of the theatrical profession. My family was a case in point. Baby Margaret had malaria, Siasconset was recommended by a fellow-member of the Maude Adams "Little Minister" Company in which my father was playing, and in consequence, one of the Underhill cottages was rented for the summer. Now, after many, many more summers of journeying back and forth to Siasconset, and later to Nantucket, the following recollections are the result. If they help bring the past to life and to make a summer's stay in 'Sconset more enjoyable, they will be considered worth the doing.

M.G.F.



## CHAPTER I

### How a Child Felt About Siasconset at the Turn of the Century

The impact of Siasconset on a city-bred child of the early 1900's started with anticipation of the trip to the beloved haven. Then the journey itself from New York City to Nantucket Island was an adventure.

You took the Fall River boat, or S.S. PURITAN or PRISCILLA, of the New Bedford Line if it were after June 15th. In either case, you took a boat, leaving from a pier in lower New York. You found the same kind of water-front confusion as if you were embarking on a trans-Atlantic voyage; same warehouse smells, same bustle of importance that accompanies the departure of a steamer large or small.

"All ashore that's going ashore"; and then the gangplank was raised, releasing you and your over-night home for the voyage.

Leaving the skyscrapers of Manhattan, then of circumspect height, floating like a mirage in the glow and shimmer of a setting sun, the steamer's prow slid through the channeled intricacies of Long Island Sound, while an exuberant band played in the stern. You, meanwhile, descended to the dining saloon to the friendly greetings of the negro waiters, all of whom, it seemed, were tall or large and of a beneficent nature; and where beaming family groups of various sizes were seated at round tables with immaculate white linen.

Excitement subsided slightly as the continual throb of engines of the commodious steamer lulled city-weary nerves, and cool air rushed into staterooms where, as you went to sleep, you sent up a prayer that you wouldn't be seasick "rounding Point Judith." All winter long, in your dreams of returning, this point of land on Rhode Island's shore, loomed large as a hazard because unavoidable cross-currents would almost certainly buffet the steamer, rocking and pitching it long enough to upset even the least squeamish. And invariably, on arrival, your solicitous friends would inquire "how was it going 'round Point Judith?"

If on the Fall River Line, early next morning you debarked at Fall River and took a train. Your object was to reach New Bedford — a matter, today of a half hour's ride in a car. But then, a sojourn of at least two hours, and not on one train, but two. You changed at Myricks. When you and the few others headed for New Bedford were unceremoniously left by yourselves on a platform, with the only building in sight a locked baggage-shed, in the cool dawn of a clear spring day, you felt abandoned, but delightfully so. Joy stirred in the sleepy recesses of your mind at this first sign that city streets were left behind, and country roads and mellow days not far off. And, when the dock at New Bedford was finally attained you got a "lift" from the salt sea air.



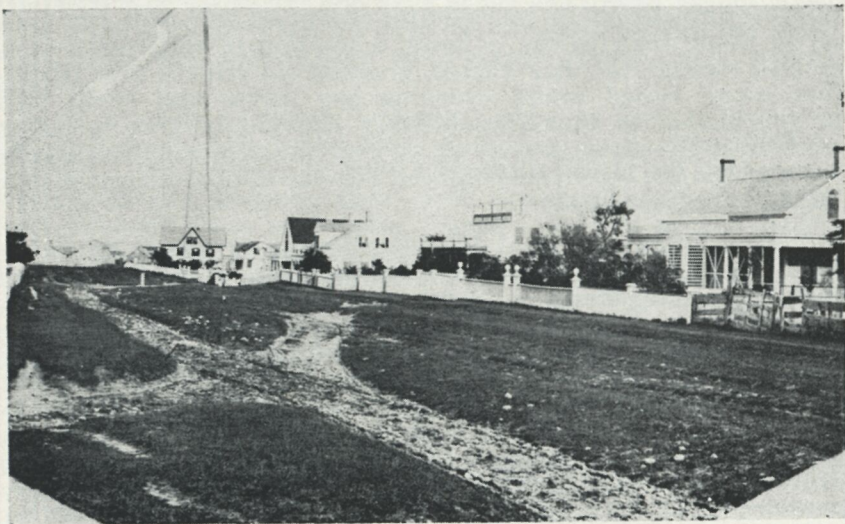
Final step in the involved journey was to board the boat for the Island. Probably the UNCATENA, (the original one), a paddle-wheel vessel, more like a large mother duck, brooding over its charges as it waddled through the ruffled waters. The enthusiasm at sighting Cross-Rip lightship was topped by suspense at watching a few thoughtful fellow-passengers, who, standing at the stern as the boat swung past the lightship, deftly tossed well-tied newspapers and magazines over the side, vaguely hoping they might land on the deck of the other ship. Most of them, merely reaching the water, would be fished out by the crew of the lightship with nets on the end of long poles. Aside from their monthly supply boat, these well-soaked periodicals were their only contact with the outside world.

Now, the steady thump of the revolving wheel and the cry of gulls were the chief diversion as the bow cut into open ocean-waters. At last the Island, *our* Island, was spotted. First the water-tower, and then Great Point Light, or the other way about, depending on fog-banks, as happens today. Sea and land-marks have not changed, but the greeting at the wharf has. No more do bell-boys, at the gangplank, sing out in rotating calls: "Point Breeze Hotel!"; "Sea Cliff Inn!"; "Ocean House!"; etc., as they stood ready to claim expectant guests, adding greatly to the delightful commotion at the steamer's arrival.

The journey had not yet reached its end, however, for the deluded few who were making the circuitous way to the village of Siasconset. (To a Nantucketer, who but the "deluded" would continue on to Siasconset when already in the Town of Nantucket?) There was Jamie Coffin, waiting in his surrey to drive you across the Island, and Frank Holdgate, with a wagon, for the luggage. This meant you were almost home, for these were your 'Sconset friends. Sometimes you took the train, if it were running, but it was pleasanter to have the surrey waiting on the dock, and to drive through the outskirts of the Town, scarcely noticing it (to a 'Sconseter, Nantucket rated no more than a backward glance). You drove past the "cross-eyed" house at the turn of the road, and then headed due east. The dirt road was flanked by the same pines and scrub-oak and beach-plum bushes as today, but then you were ambling at a sedate pace, and every bush and wild rose and daisy were noted, as you counted off the large white milestones, while the surrey swayed with a sea-going roll. At long last, reaching Bean Hill, there in the distance was the village of Siasconset! Beyond the village was the sea, and beyond the sea, 3,000 miles of it, was Spain. Here was land's end indeed! Where you were to be free; free to go and come as you pleased, where the air was so sweet-smelling that poems were written about it, and where the buttoned-up winter community unfolded each summer to let you in. The horse knew it, too, as he ran down the one hill, and up the next rise, before reaching the cluster of cottages. And then, you really were home!



The house, to be sure, seemed smaller each year, as you had grown taller. But that smell of sea-dampness, in a house closed for the long winter months, and that feeling of renewed acquaintanceship with your own possessions was exactly the same. The neighborly Mrs. Holdgate would have a fire going in the coal stove,



Main Street in early 1900's

and a fish dinner on the top of it, and if you were the child of a theatrical family, as some of us were, and had only a boarding-school or boarding-house for your winter living, this was home with a capital H. After dinner, investigation of every corner of the old house began. These walls had had a hundred years of sporadic living in them, and had definitely housed happiness, which you felt, without knowing why. You rambled through rooms, some with such low ceilings you might be on a ship; you mounted stairs so steep they must have been patterned from a ship's companion-way; all connected by rambling passageways. A sense of mystery hung over one remote room, where a secret staircase led to an upper bedroom. The story was that it had been built behind the fireplace for the purpose of escape from Indians. This unlikely tale was not taken seriously, since Indians had long since died-off, even before the house was built.

Outside, back of the house, was a windmill, our pride and joy, as it gave us running water when there was no public water system, and privies were prevalent. If you were sent out "to turn on the mill," you pushed up a stick, loosening an attached wire connected with a large fan-like wheel 30 feet above, which at once revolved into the wind, with a clump and whirring sound. Sometimes, though rarely, there would be no wind, and the prospect of an empty tank would be ominous. And, there had been occasions, in a no'th-easter, when the wind blew so hard you



didn't dare to let the huge fan loose. Once, when it did slip its moorings in a storm, before anything could be done, it had snapped off and lay useless on the lawn, while the disconsolate household stared down at it, with no water, and workmen scarce.

But, on that first day of the new season, with memory of disaster dim and before more duties caught up with you, you were off to roam, stockingless, a great concession in those days. You ambled through the cozy village, greeting old friends over fences, then along rutted roads, crushing bay leaves and sweet fern in your hand, as your grandmother had taught you, to better smell their sweetness, as you sat on your favorite stile. Eventually you reached the beach, sinking well into the comfortable sand and taking long looks at the sea.

First flush of renewal over, there must have been chores at home. Certainly for the older folk there was much hanging of curtains, putting down of rugs, unwrapping this nicknack, and unfolding that drapery and washing and polishing everything in sight. But that all melted into the fun of being alive in the place you loved most. "Uncle Sam," one of our favorite villagers, would arrive at an early hour in the morning, and in stentorian tones call out: "You up yet, Percy?" My mother, with golden hair and sleepy blue eyes, appeared in the kitchen to greet the handsome white-haired, white-mustached man, who could well have been a counterpart of the original picture of "Uncle Sam," not only in looks but in the forth-rightness and integrity he stood for. Sam Pitman brought the milk and eggs, and had in his wagon many of the season's vegetables grown at his farm, just up the road. On this farm he also had a flock of leghorn chickens, so white in the sunlight they looked scrubbed daily. And he approved of my mother, in spite of her habit of sleeping late; well ingrained in her from years of acting on the stage.

Next to appear might be Billy Bowen, who would sit in our kitchen having large cups of coffee, while reminiscing of his whaling days at sea. Some of his tales, whether "tall" or not no one could verify, had to do with the Fiji Island maidens, and little girls were discouraged from listening when he came to this point. But the picture is still vivid of him, with a glint in his eye, gleefully launching forth on the Fiji tale. A short, compact little man with gray side-whiskers, he wore a small flat straw hat most of the time, lived alone in a small house down the lane, and told one of the neighbors that all he had in it was "a cot and a pot"!

The summer well launched, these and many other renewed friendships piled up more and more memories for the future. The days drifted by as casually as the fog banks that came and went, with many a blue-and-gold day for contrast. The days were warmer now, and you were learning to swim; held firmly by the back of your bathing suit, in the rough breakers, by the long, strong arm of tall Jamie Coffin, with eyes as blue as the sea that his whalemens ancestors had sailed. It was those same strong arms



that held my grandmother, when she was dying, with none of her family near enough to reach her, and with no one else at hand to help the nurse lift her. I, too young to be of any help, had been sent across the road to stay with a neighbor. And when I had noticed the shades had been drawn in our front windows I was told what had happened, and have never like drawn shades since. That was a summer when the days did not speed by. But the warm moor wind and soft spoken surf slowly spread their healing comfort.

On Sundays, walks to Sankaty Lighthouse were in order, by the path made famous by Bliss Carmen's poem "The Path to Sankaty." My memory of Bliss Carmen is of a tall, thin figure wearing glasses, roaming about with a pleasantly cheery expression. Through these many years, no one else has so well caught the simplicity and appeal of 'Sconset in verse as he did in a "Path to Sankaty," and "Did You Ever Hear of 'Sconset?" While you strolled along the North Bluff, past cottage after cottage, with friendly nods from porch or rocker, off to the right was more and more green-blue sea, as the imperceptible ascent mounted. Until, after winding through open moorland for almost a mile, you reached the peak, and the red and white tower, with its incandescent lighting apparatus, dominated the scene. This beam, at present even stronger, penetrates fog and mist, and circles the village with a shaft of light as it revolves nightly.

When not taking a walk as a pastime, we rode bicycles, the only mode of transportation, excepting the horse-drawn surrey. These surreys would often be at post office-square, ready to drive the affluent to the golf-links, or to take the ladies for a trip over the moor roads. And if they were lucky enough to get Jamie Coffin and his rig, they learnt the names and hiding-places of all the wild-flowers, including ten or fifteen varieties of goldenrod, but not of the where-abouts of the Scotch heather. This was a well-kept secret then, as it is now, because of the scarcity of its rich bloom. When your bicycle needed tires pumped up, or other repairs you besieged George Rogers to help you out. He was not only the one man in the village who could fix a bicycle but also the only one who repaired Delco engines and machines of most kinds. He would be seen walking from one end of 'Sconset to the other almost daily, with his large collie dog behind him, going to the rescue of troubled householders. It was told that when autumn came, and the last house had been locked up for the winter, he took to his rocker beside the stove, never leaving it until spring came around again.

The summers, when the days hurried by so fast there was no hanging onto them, you found that just about as you had everyone greeted, leave-taking time had started, and the good-byes had begun. The disconsolate feeling that all these close ties of home and friends were once more to be broken gradually seeped into everyday doings, until, like a pall hanging over the household, the realization that the time had come to prepare to get ready to



leave yourself! The breaking up of the house began. Not literally, of course, with hammer and tongs, but somehow it managed to achieve that look. All the Victorian nick-nacks were put away again. All pictures were covered with newspapers. All books were wrapped in newspaper, rugs rolled with moth balls and put on shelves. Pillows perched on backs of chairs or bed posts, to prevent rats from nesting. And, last of all, the curtains taken down. Rats, mice and dampness were the great enemies that might take over your treasured haven for the eight months you were gone.

Finally the day of departure loomed before you. Farewells had been said. Whoever helped with the cleaning had departed, having been given all "menevalans" as left-overs are called, all odds and ends of sugar, flour, catsup, etc., too good to be thrown away. Jamie Coffin had come with a load of seaweed, called kelp, to put around the hydrangeas, to keep them warm and encourage blueness of blossom from the iodine it contained. Frank Holdgate had put up the storm doors, which gave a boxed feeling to the house that was almost coffin-like, and you sat at the front window for the last time watching Mr. Holdgate light the kerosene street-lamp on the corner, reminding you always of Stevenson's "Lamp-lighter." It hardly seemed worthwhile going to bed because you must get up in the middle of the night to be ready for the carriage at five-thirty, which allowed an hour and a half to drive the eight miles to Town for the seven o'clock boat. In the darkness the surrey came to the gate with its carriage lamps lit. One last glance over the house; checking windows, doors, you went through the ghoulis-looking rooms, the furniture covered with old sheets and all windows shuttered, and your elders vowing every year, they would never go to all this trouble another autumn. But they always did! You had already had a sketchy breakfast as enough fire had been left in the coal stove to make toast and a cup of coffee for the grown-folks, and warm milk for you, but no crumbs could be left anywhere, not a dish unwashed. This was the rule. Why no one was delegated to go in and do all this after you left, as happens now, has never been divulged. But it was certainly the custom then, to leave everything as if you might never return, and that was the feeling that came over you, as sleepily and morosely you departed in the swaying surrey. Half way across the moors, over the horizon behind you, the dawn would begin to break; a cold one, greenish yellow in color, no pink glow or warmth, just an endless void of slow light, as it might appear at the ending of the universe, which too easily brought this dismal prospect to mind. Supposedly, your spirits revived before the long five hour boat trip to New Bedford was over, and, by the time you had reached hurly-burly city streets, there had been a normal adjustment to the confusion. But from that moment on, in back of your mind was the enticing prospect of another summer yet to come. And so — Hail and Farewell — to Siasconset, 1905!!



### 'SCONSET SHORE AT DUSK

This sandy crescent coast of many a yellow hue,  
Shaping a half-moon stretch of deep sea blue,  
With rim that fades far off as distant dreams,  
Is fringed with seething surf that ever teems  
With constant sound,  
The cradle-song for this our planet spinning 'round.  
And as the heavy ocean smoothly rolls,  
Lapping this island's shores, far out from mainland shoals,  
With overhead an opal tinted sky no cloud to mar,  
As twilight dusk has cast its spell,  
You wander on these sands to find a treasured shell,  
While all about the cloak of calm supplies  
Contentment, like the sea-mist spread 'cross pallid skies.

M.G.F.



## CHAPTER II

### My Family and Their Friends of the American Theatre.

When my father first arrived in Siasconset on a rainy night in early June it was not an occasion of good omen for a successful summer vacation. Having made the lengthy trip from New York City by boat and train and boat, he had somehow managed to miss connections at New Bedford and had to take the afternoon boat which landed him at the Nantucket wharf at night. As he was aiming for Siasconset, where his family had already preceded him, he found out he must engage a conveyance at the wharf for the eight-mile drive across the Island. Going to a surrey standing nearby, he lifted the wet flap of the shiny black carriage-curtains and a long thin face with a gray beard peered out at him. On inquiring how much the driver would charge to take him to Siasconset, he was slightly startled to learn it would be five dollars. That was all he had paid for a ticket from New York to Nantucket. There being no alternative, since the train for 'Sconset was not yet running for the season, he climbed into the vehicle, the flap was buttoned down and the horse started, clomp, clomp, off into the darkness. For over an hour he was lurched and jogged along, with no exact idea of where he was going, enclosed in dank room with a laconic Islander who showed no eagerness to exchange pleasantries with a stranger. This was Levi Coffin, the head of the well-known Coffin family, who was satisfied with the Island as it was, and had no craving to let outsiders into the security of his peaceful village.

When at last deposited at the rented cottage door, my father was greeted exuberantly by his family who had felt stranded in this far-away place without the head of the household. The family consisted of wife, a small daughter and mother-in-law, who, in spite of the vagaries of a coal stove, had a hot dinner waiting for him. Even so, by the time he retired he was questioning the advisability of wasting a whole summer vacation in such a remote spot, where winds whistled through unplastered walls and a clammy chillness crept into bed sheets.

Although by the next morning the rain had stopped, a gray, cotton-flannel-like fog was wrapped around everything. Not even the ocean was visible but the dull thud of the muffled surf on the beach below could be heard. All that could be seen, as father peered out the window, was an abandoned gray row-boat, several gray shingled cottages, not abandoned but obviously not yet occupied, and strewn about the surrounding grounds, the huge gray vertebra and ribs of the leviathan of the deep. These weathered relics of the whaling era, when Nantucket was a prosperous commercial sea-port, were now considered decorative as garden ornaments. But on this gloomy morning they only added grimness to the aspect. Also the fog had increased the dampness to the point of penetrating to the marrow of the bones.

Consequently father wished to remedy the situation and, with authoritative finality, told mother he had decided they would



leave the baby with her grandmother and take a boat for Europe where they would spend the summer. Ever wishing to please her spouse, mother sounded out her mother on this proposition at the dinner table that day, whereupon my grandmother replied, in nothing-if-not-firm tones, "You will not go off and stay away all summer with a child to look after, and several invited guests coming!" And that was that! Since my father was devoted enough to his mother-in-law to have invited her on the honeymoon, and since he now had to admit her argument was justified, he accepted her decision. Then, the very next morning, lo and behold, the sun was out! Only a 'Sconseter knows what luminous magic can be evoked by sunshine on the Siasconset shore. The air, washed clean by miles of open ocean from three directions, seems so translucent as to be "heady," and "air-like-wine" is the favorite expression. In fact, for the rest of mother's days, wherever she might be, in Italy or California, on any exceptionally bright morning, a nostalgic look would come into her eyes, and glancing skyward, she would exclaim — "a typical 'Sconset day!"

The good weather having weaned my father from his mournful mood, the witchery of the place took over. For one thing, he enjoyed the sensation of living on ship-board, which was ever present with the encircling ocean continually making its nearness heard. Also it pleased him to have the feeling of all ties to the mainland severed, which was due to the erratic transportation and the slow communication facilities. Just as on a long sea-voyage, you are able to detach yourself from pressing problems, so in Siasconset in the early 1900's, you were cut-off enough to feel disassociated from reality. This was conducive to the special brand of casual camaraderie that appealed to my father. He would amble along the narrow dirt paths, stopping to lean over a picket fence to visit with a friend, or perch on a porch step to pass the time of day. It was later said by one of the native villagers, "I like that George Fawcett. He wears those old khaki pants and speaks to everybody." Almost everyone seemed to fall into the pattern of this simplified way of life, even as to wearing-apparel. The sports outfit for ladies and little girls was a plain ankle-length skirt and a shirt-waist, or middie-blouse, giving a nautical accent. The only fancy addition to the middie-blouse might be a tie, a large black or silk square knotted in such a way that when tied around the collar it hung down in front in a protruding bag-like effect, making no sense at all. Men were comfortable in unpressed trousers, unstarched shirts with bandanas about their necks, in contrast to the stiff collared fashion of the day. A bride being brought to the village for the first time, and expecting to meet actresses in glamorous outfits, packed many furbelows in many trunks she never opened during her stay. Since most gatherings were impromptu, there was no occasion to dress-up; a welcome relief to play-folk who had spent most of their winter months in and out of costumes and in the public gaze. No need to be on show here as this was before the tourist era, and the villagers and other summer residents had decided the stage people were a



harmless but incomprehensible breed, and had settled down to accepting us as such. At least most felt that way, but a few stayed aloof, for still, in the early 1900's, the Theatrical Profession was felt to carry the stigma of immorality, left-over from the eighteenth century, when most actresses were loose-women and actors not respected in their communities. But here in the small village of 'Sconset, we were part and parcel of the community.

With this pleasant tolerance on all sides, you drifted along in the summer sun and foggy haze. Marketing was as effortless as it could be anywhere. Milk, eggs and vegetables were vended from a wagon driven to your back-door, where also the fish-man arrived with his catch, two or three times a week. For meat, you only had to walk, or ride a bicycle, to the end of Broadway to the market where the kindly Mr. Burgess, a butcher of integrity, sold meat that came up to the best standards of any in the country, according to the opinions of his much-traveled customers. To many actors and actresses in the numerous touring companies, the highlights of the trip would be meals at the best selection of the eating places from Boston to New Orleans or to San Francisco. And after long seasons on-the-road the gourmets would often be heard to compare notes on a 'Sconset porch and Mr. Burgess' cuts of meat always compared favorably. An added pleasure to the anticipation of your purchase was to find sitting on a stool at the high cashier's desk, in the whitest of starched dresses, Miss Maria Folger, a native villager, who had the pinkest cheeks possible, and her forthright greeting and clean-cut charm still clings to anyone's memories of early 'Sconset days. If you happened to be a little girl or boy with only a penny to spend, you went across the street to where "Miss Cora," with her all-pervading cheerfulness and patience, would let you take a half-hour to make a choice for your large purchase of candy, while pressing your nose against the glass-case and asking innumerable questions. This first venture of Miss Cora Stevens in shopkeeping led to a long career as one of Nantucket's foremost merchants. Her stationery and gift shop on Petticoat Row, in the Town of Nantucket, and later on Main Street, tastefully supplied the requirements of many for over forty years.

If you had been sent for an extra fresh piece of fish, you would around the path to the bluff road and then down the steep incline to Codfish Park. Well named, for there, spread out on racks or on the roofs of the shacks, were the codfish drying in the sun. Nearby were the sheds of Mr. Thomas and Mr. Cash, the reliable and affable fishermen of the village. They would sell you their latest catch, cod, flounder, small succulent sand-dabs, or butter-fish and blues in season. Or you might be lucky and arrive at the time when they were bringing in their catch and then you'd buy it from the boat on the beach. Almost any day off the 'Sconset shore, when the fog was not too thick, you could see a line of four or five dories riding the rollers about a mile out in the open ocean where the men of the village were anchored on





William H. Thompson and George Fawcett at the old 'Sconset Golf Club



the rip, fishing. If it were blue-fish they were getting, they stood in the bow, whirling a large drail on a long line over their heads and flinging it far off into the ruffled water as the tide was changing. When they had rowed back to shore it was exciting to watch them bring their heavy dories in through the pounding surf and land them on the beach. They always had a struggle to land without capsizing in this line of breakers where they could get little or no foothold, due to the abrupt shelving-off of the beach into deep water. Seldom did any of the summer-folk take part in this hazardous mode of fishing. They only watched the boats land and, for a quarter or fifty cents, bought their fish and trudged home with it after it had been cleaned on the spot — from the deep ocean to the skillet in no time at all!

As I have mentioned, all this naturalness caught my father's fancy. Then came the opportunity to play golf. Three summer residents, not of the theatrical colony, Mr. Jonathan Grout, Mr. Thomas Galvin, and Mr. Murray Mitchell, had joined forces to start a golf club and had picked out the site of Bloomingdale Farm, high up, off the Main Road with rolling fields in all directions and a very special view of the moors and sea beyond. And before long, the 'Sconset Golf Club was established and became the center of much activity, and my mother spent the rest of her summers as a "golf-widow." To be sure, putting-matches took care of the ladies, most of whom did not play golf, and on Saturday afternoons, in their long white dresses with high collars, (scarcely a sports outfit!) they vied with each other on the large green below the front of the club-house, while others, who were assembling for the Saturday afternoon tea, looked on. Later the large room and porch with the panoramic view buzzed with congratulations for the winners of the matches, (the men having played theirs off on the nine holes) while tea and lemonade, nothing stronger, were served and sandwiches and cakes were passed by the youngsters, mostly little girls with maybe a sash tied around their white cotton dresses for the special occasion.

Though not the very first of stage-folk to come to Siasconset, we were one of the first of the theatrical families to own a summer home there, and mother's and father's enthusiasm for the place became contagious. In the midst of New York's bright lights during a winter season, while relaxing at "The Lamb's Club," father would pour forth to his Broadway companions his joy in the charms of a remote village on a small island that contrasted so completely with the busy street where this famous club for actors stood. By summer-time, when the theatres were all closed because of the heat, those members who were fed up with hard, hot pavements, found their way to this privileged haven.

Also my mother added her own glowing accounts of the Island's tranquility while busy rehearsing and acting at Albaugh's Theatre in Baltimore, where she and father headed their well-known Stock Company. Although Mother might be playing Rosalind in "As You Like It," her heart was not in "the forest of



Arden," but in the grove of ailanthus and locust trees at the side of her 'Sconset home. She had been acting in a play called "Rosemary" when she bought the house and named it after the play. Also when she found the house needed a dining-room table she had the property-man of the Theatre buy her the antique Sheraton table they had borrowed for the set of "She Stoops to Conquer." And so the home on Nantucket Island and the Baltimore Theatre were tied together. Others of the Stock Company caught the contagion and before long Frank Gillmore, who had played, amongst other roles, Romeo to Mother's Juliet, brought his family to summer in 'Sconset and another leading-man, Regan Hughston, who had been a popular Orlando in "As You Like It," came along, too, and the comedian Frank Craven, who first made a hit on Broadway in "The First Year," and later in the original production of "Our Town," playing the "Stage-Manager." The world grew, and some prominent Baltimore families, among them the Penroses, became interested in the far-away village by the sea. Soon they were also making the long trip by trains and boats to the Island, carrying along, as recommended by Dr. Clement Penrose for the children, whole cases of purified "Walker-Gordon" milk; this being before the days of pasteurization. The two young children in the Gillmore family were Margalo and her sister Ruth, who became well-known New York actresses, Margalo later reaching prominence in "The Silver Cord," and with the Theatre Guild in "He Who Gets Slapped" and "Marco's Millions." She and the rest of the Gillmores spent summers in their home on the North Bluff of Siasconset for many years. Frank Gillmore, who was an amateur botanist, roamed the moors for flora and fauna, and also took a great interest in the civic growth of Siasconset, helping to promote the Casino and was later its president for several years. Later he helped to make theatre history by being one of the founders of "Actor's Equity Association." And after it joined up with the A. F. of L. he led a successful strike against the Managers Association, correcting many long-standing abuses. Being a man of rigid integrity with an urbane approach, he piloted "Equity" through many crises for the years as its president.

Among other noted theatre folk of that era who spent their long enforced vacations at Siasconset, were Mrs. G. H. Gilbert, DeWolf Hopper and Isabel Irving with her husband, W. H. Thompson, and many more. "Grandma Gilbert," as she was affectionately known, was the expert character comedienne of the Daly Company, and was as much beloved in this country as in her native England. She had toured the United States as a young woman, doing one-night-stands all over the West, in mining towns as well as the large cities. When in her seventies she joined the celebrated Repertory Company under the direction of Augustin Daly, at Daly's Theatre, in New York, at Twenty-ninth Street and Broadway. It was as a member of this Company that my mother, then Percy Haswell, a young actress just starting on her career, met Mrs. Gilbert, who took the young blonde ingenue



"under her wing," as it were, and mother's admiration and devotion lasted through the years. Some of the roles in which Mrs. Gilbert excelled were in well-known comedies of the period such as "A Night Off" and "Seven Twenty-Eight." She spent her summers in our house in 'Sconset, as did DeWolf Hopper's mother. These two elderly ladies with my grandmother made a triumvirate that ruled the household. And as "Grandma Gilbert" brought her own special English breakfast tea, and Mrs. Hopper her own imported China tea, and the rest were satisfied with the local variety, there were always three tea-pots on the dinner table. Also, to my mother's consternation, "Grandma Gilbert," when even at eighty, would not allow anyone to wait on her. Always immaculately dressed, generally in black silk, with a small lace "throw" on her head, her thin frame erect, she would mount our particularly steep stairs to what is still called "Grandma Gilbert's room," with an elasticity of step that exemplified her British self-reliance to the very last summer before she died.

And often of a summer evening on our porch my father's devoted friend, DeWolf Hopper, he of the "Casey-At-The-Bat" fame, in deceptively solemn, deep tones, would roll out convulsively amusing anecdotes that enchanted even his youngest hearers, as he was not only one of the cleverest comedians of our stage, but a noted wit and raconteur as well. A tall man, broad-shouldered, he had an elongated shaped head with no hair on it, as he had lost it all with a fever in boyhood and had to wear a wig for the rest of his days. Also the skin on his face, in later life, was of an ashen gray color from having absorbed too much silver-nitrate in a throat gargle which he had continued using long after it had been prescribed, not realizing its potency. And yet withal, William DeWolf Hopper was an imposing man, with the air of authority that came from being "of the manner born," to quote a phrase of the period, as his mother was one of the prominent DeWolf family of Rhode Island. Although his claim to fame nowadays seems to be his inimitable recitation of "Casey At The Bat," his abilities and accomplishments went much farther than that. Excelling as an actor and singer, some of his best known parts were in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, playing New York and London, and touring the United States for many years; there were — Ko-Ko in "The Mikado," Dick Dead-Eye in "H. M. S. Pinafore," Bunthorne in "Patience." Also, though not of the figure described by Mr. Dickens, he must have been a popular "Mr. Pickwick," since the record has it in "Who's Who In The Theatre," that he toured for two years in a play of that name. Among innumerable other roles were Falstaff in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and David in an all-star cast of "The Rivals." He was a star as well in "Ermine" and "El Capitan," and other popular musicals of the day. The record also enumerates his six wives, of whom the late well-known columnist, Hedda Hopper, was his fifth. They, with their baby son William, spent a summer in 'Sconset in one of the larger houses on Main Street.



Other friendships dear to the heart of my parents were those of the William Thompsons. Mrs. Thompson was the beautiful, blonde actress, Isabel Irving, who had an elusive charm that clung even through her later years. With gold still in her fading hair, and with a mocking gleam in gray-blue eyes, she would sit in a green winged-chair before our open-fire using her shapely hands for emphasis, and bring to life her early career in the theatre. She started in New York with Rosina Volks Company, then later was with the Augustin Daly Company already commented upon.



A welcoming group at the station.

At the prime of her career she played the "leads" in such frivolous drawing-room comedies as "Tyranny of Tears" and "The Liars" with the distinguished actor John Drew, at the Empire Theatre, then a well-known land-mark at 39th Street and Broadway in New York. "Aunt Isabel," as I called her (though no kin), was an impressionable person with her head-in-the-clouds most of the time, but with a gay sense of humour as well. She became a great traveler as the years went on and one of her favorite anecdotes was of taking her very grouchy husband with a hang-over after a night with his cronies in Paris, to Oberammergau, to view the Passion Play. "Uncle Billy" Thompson was a distinct contrast to his wife. Big and burly, with a voice almost like a growl, he endeared himself to many, especially to his golf-caddies in 'Sconset, by his gruff affability and his generosity. When he and my father played golf together, competing affably and arguing over scores, they were like a couple of Newfoundland dogs mauling and badgering each other. Although the Thompsons' first summer was spent on Main Street in Mrs. Oar's boarding house, (a large neo-Grec building now turned sideways and made into a summer home for the Roy Larsens), it was the North Bluff with its view of the sea where they chose to build a home. By the next summer a



high-shingled house had been erected and named "The Captain's Cabin." So called because on top of the roof was a cupola room, outfitted like a ship's cabin, with bunks and port-holes included, where "Uncle Billy," having never followed the sea, could at least act out the role of a ship's captain with as much enjoyment as he did his parts on Broadway which were, for instance, one of the Elders in Maude Adams' production of "The Little Minister," or the Cardinal in Annie Russell's company of "The Royal Family."

Of these many varied and vivid personalities, engendered by the nature of their profession, there were several more who stood out, the Jeffersons among them, Frank, Willie, and Joe, Jr., sons of Joseph Jefferson, of "Rip Van Winkle" fame. And Bob Hilliard, the imposingly handsome New York star, who had made his mark in plays like "Blue Jeans" and later "The Argyle Case." His sartorial perfection, in contrast to the casualness of his 'Sconset colleagues, was a revelation, when seen along the dusty by-ways. He would be caparisoned in a well-pressed white flannel suit, with an orange band around a panama hat and an orange tie to match the orange calendula in his button-hole! And not to forget Harry Woodruff! Here was a handsome man with wavy blonde hair, who could charm the women across the footlights without even half trying. In "Brown of Harvard," he portrayed a young hero who won and wore a Harvard "H." This so infuriated the undergraduates of Harvard College when he played Boston, they caused a near riot in the theatre, claiming no one could wear the "H" on or off-stage who had not won it! A slight case of jealousy, female begot, might have entered into the animosity. After a season of acting in Honolulu, Harry Woodruff brought back from the Pacific Island a plan of a house which was built for him on his beloved island in the Atlantic Ocean. With bedrooms downstairs, the whole of the upstairs was a large living-dining-room, with only a corner partitioned off for kitchen, and surrounded on three sides by a wide porch. Being a most hospitable man he had gatherings of friends frequently who filled these porches, exchanging bits of theatrical gossip interspersed with exclamations about the view of sea and moors and sunsets. As 'Sconset life was more or less a family affair, little girls were included, on these afternoon occasions. The house still stands in 'Sconset on Morey Lane, not far from the Main Road, and is at present owned by the James Hutton family.

Another "great lover," off-stage particularly, who frequented the Ocean View Hotel, was Vincent Serrano. He bore the manner of his high-bred Spanish ancestors and, as my father often noted, was adept at "pouring love down ladies' backs." It wasn't quite "the thing" to face a lady with amorous protestations in those days, so the gentleman stood behind her and whispered his sweet nothings into her ear!

Most of these well-known personages were on hand to greet their even better known and beloved "Queen of the Stage," Lillian



Russell, who, after she had retired and was married to Alexander Moore, made a visit to this far-away stronghold of her comrades of her theatrical days. Her title was no misnomer, for by her



The 'Sconset Railroad Station

beauty and graciousness she had become a great favorite on both sides of the footlights and had been the highest paid actress on the New York stage. She was as unassuming as she was beautiful, and remained unspoiled by all the adulation. It is recorded by the biographer of Weber and Fields, famous Jewish comedians, with whom she acted and sang for many years, that she was "first at rehearsals, last to leave, asking no privilege nor indulgence." She had studied for grand opera but made her biggest success on the musical comedy stage, starting at Tony Pastor's Theatre, well-known on lower Broadway for vaudeville and musical reviews, and she also sang in light opera. Behind the fans of the genteel ladies of the day, there was some whispering about her personal life, but she was never flamboyant, and by the time she made her visit to Siasconset, the mantle of respectability had cloaked her reputation. On a bright 'Sconset afternoon, this kindly, glamorous lady with the wavy gold hair and hour-glass figure was driven in a surrey out to the 'Sconset Golf Club. Of the many who were brought to meet her on the high porch, was a rotund, straight-haired blonde child who remembers that she was as gracious as she was said to be, and that she wore a large black straw hat, tailored white blouse with high collar and a long black skirt, the outfit made fashionable by the Gibson-girl drawings of that era.



In those early 1900 days the Casino was being planned for 'Sconset as a gathering place for the village social and sports events. The actors and actresses of the so-called Colony gave of their time and talents to raise money for this project. Benefits were first held in the railroad station located below the bank where the main road meets the seashore. A piano would have to be hauled there by the local expressman, Oscar Folger, a handsome villager to whom a piano was light-weight, compared to the huge, necessarily-sturdy theatrical trunks which, with grim determination, he had become accustomed to maneuver, often up steep, narrow stairs and into bedrooms not much larger than the trunks. Dances were held also to raise money, in the station from time to time. There was always a fiddler, the local station agent, and Japanese paper lanterns strung across the large bare room for decoration, with no night trains to disturb the festivities. Once, when there was a night train scheduled to take the Nantucket audience back to Town after one of the benefits, some scions of the summer residents greased the tracks so well that the engine could not make the grade up Tom Never's Head!!

With the Casino completed these benefits had to be continued to pay off the mortgage. They became the event of the summer season on the Island. Groups from Nantucket Town either came on the special train run for the occasion, or drove over the moors in three-seater surreys, to view these professional entertainments. The performance would consist of one-act plays, musical numbers, solos and monologues, anything already in the repertory of the players. Bob Hilliard, for instance, could be counted on for a vivid rendition of the melodramatic poem, "The Face on the Bar-room Floor," and DeWolf Hopper's recital of "Casey at the Bat," was always welcomed. One summer my father was prevailed upon to do a scene from "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," although the gruesome transition from the good Dr. Jekyll to the horrible Mr. Hyde was scarcely light summer fare.

Wishing not to be out-done by our elders, and since most of us belonged to theatrical families, we children decided we should put on some kind of performance, too. Our idea was to raise money for the Siasconset Chapel Fund, or the New York Herald Fresh-Air Fund. And since we had no play to present, it apparently took but little urging to persuade me to take on the job of writing one and directing it also. One of the young actresses in the cast was Margalo Gillmore, making her stage debut, and she insisted, later in life, that I chose to write a fairy play so I could cast myself as the Queen! Be that as it may, we took over the stage of the Casino, and when the opening night came "Queen Nasturtium," (named for 'Sconset's most prolific bloom) in a cheese cloth costume with ivy leaves for a crown reposed on a "mossy bank" of mealy-plum vine and bayberry bushes, receiving her court of nine and ten-year-olds. But to the crowded audience of mothers and fathers and friends, the most entertaining feature of the performance was the unrehearsed competition of the



players for the most number of bouquets being handed "over the foot-lights," as was the custom of presenting flowers in those days. Tiny Ruth Gillmore had to be bodily restrained from dashing onto the stage before her cue, so fearful was she the bouquets would give out before she made her entrance. And it was said the many seasoned veterans of the New York stage, viewing this earnest and uninhibited band of Thespians, rocked with laughter.

With all these mildly exciting goings-on, more summer days sped by. The casual days in July would grow into busier ones in August and then came the weeks of farewells, and all the promises to reunite or communicate during winter months: for to be a 'Sconseter at that time was like belonging to a club and you had to keep up your membership, on or off the Island.

### 'SCONSET

by George Fawcett

O moorland mine!  
Tipped by the loving sea,  
Rippled by the restless sea.  
The golden sun with golden tints  
Woos your flowers from their sleep  
And gems your bosom  
With a thousand glints.

O moorland mine!  
Rippled by the restless sea,  
Whose horses shake their frothy manes,  
Prance threateningly to the bedded shore,  
Surging with the last of thousand leagues,  
Then gently lave the sanded beach  
And ebb, laughing, to the deep.

O moorland mine!  
Tipped by the restless sea,  
O golden sun, tempered  
By the sou' sou' west breeze,  
O benign island of the sea,  
You belong to God and me!  
For who can rob me of what I feel?

(Reprint from "Inquirer and Mirror")



### CHAPTER III

#### More Memories to Round Out the Picture of Early 'Sconset Days.

The Main Road, from the Town of Nantucket on the harbor side of The Island, to the village of Siasconset on the open sea, has gone straight across the middle of the island ever since it was only a rutted road. However, as it approached the village at the beginning of this century, the aspect of the surroundings was not quite as it is to-day, although many of the same houses flank its sides. The dust rose as you drove down to the postoffice, situated then as now, at the foot of the road, but no trees were along the way, no trim grass lawns and hedges, and you often encountered a few cows and stray chickens wandering across the roadway. Only picket fences kept them from nibbling at the garden nasturtiums. The larger of the houses are much the same in outline, but some have been remodeled extensively, and not all with architectural purity in mind. My grandmother was one of the worst offenders. Having decided she wanted more light and air in the house, she had left instructions in the autumn with the carpenter to build a bay-window, a popular adjunct to homes of that day. When she returned to 'Sconset in the Spring, she found she had not only a bay-window, but a Gothic turret as well! The carpenter had not known exactly how to taper off the top of a bay-window, so he continued it to a peak, adding a ball as ornament on the top. The turret is still there, giving a late-Victorian flair to this more sedate 1830 house, at the corner of Main Street and School. One characteristic of these houses on the Main Road are their cupolas and "walks" where the fishermen of the family went with spy-glass to watch for the schools of fish to make their appearances before setting forth in the dories for the catch. Our house had a large cupola, where I often played with my dolls before it had to be removed on account of bad roof leaks.

When my father and mother were too busy acting in their Stock Company in Baltimore, it was allotted to my grandmother to come early in the Spring to 'Sconset to get the new home in readiness for the summer, and I was brought along. It would be bleak and windy and rainy at times, with fog in between, and little to occupy a small child indoors. But up the road was the Pitman's Farm, Bunker Hill Farm, they called it, and "Uncle Sam," (the same "Uncle Sam" who brought us milk and eggs of a morning), and "Aunt Abbie," his wife, knew how to make children feel welcome. And when their grandchildren, Elizabeth and Clara Grimes, drove over from Town and we played in the barn hayloft, it was compensation enough for the gloom outside. Or when the weather was at all clear and the large round tin pans of milk were set out on a long bench at the side of the ell to stand until cream formed, and we were allowed a spoonful, that was fun, too! Bunker Hill farm house can be seen at the brow of the hill today, but there is no long bench with pans of milk, alas!, and no barn.

During one of these early springs, another house on this high ground, next door to the farm, was being renovated and strange





The original Marconi wireless station now home of Charles P. Cahoon

looking apparatus was being installed. Also a pole, tall for this wind-swept spot, was set up with wires in many directions securing it to the ground and to the nearby house. Amongst the villagers much speculation about this activity took place, and it was learned this was to be the first commercial Marconi Wireless Station on the American coast. Marconi's invention had been heard of, but the idea of actually sending messages from Siasconset, thirty miles at sea, to the mainland through the air, without wires or cables, was bewildering. And when this small child ambled past the building, and bright sparks all but flew out of the open doorway, she would scramble to the other side of the road in awe. Or when curiosity got the best of fright, she peeked inside and was given long strips of tickertape with odd figures on them, taken from a machine that recorded the messages for decoding. This



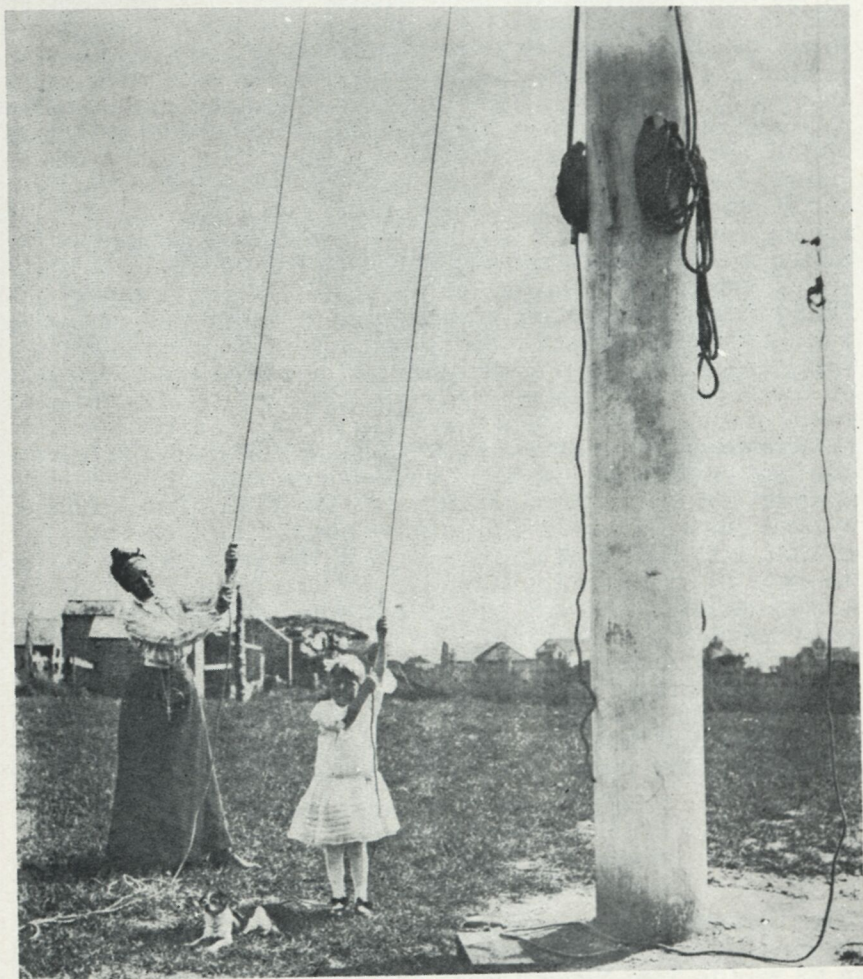
location had been selected for its remoteness by the NEW YORK HERALD, who sponsored this first wireless station, as a promotional venture. The house chosen remains standing and is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles P. Cahoon.

The crew of engineers and operators who came to man the station found themselves far from their various homes, and, though not on a dangerous mission, at least it was a pioneering one, and they must have felt as cut-off from the centers of population as if they had been in Greenland today. While taking the daily walk back and forth to the post-office, these men would stop and pass the time of day with my affable Southern grandmother. She always welcomed visitors, even with the house in upheaval, and would ask them in and, before long, would be feeding them ample dinners of fried chicken and corn bread. The man in charge of the station was tall Matt Tierney, who was the first to receive the distress signals from the sinking "TITANIC." Harry Holden was in charge later, and he eventually settled down in Siasconset and married a local girl, Maria Folger, the same "Miss Maria" who had been the cashier at the meat market. Among the assistants, acting also as messenger boy, was a young foreigner. Because he was far from his Russian homeland, and was only about seventeen, he appealed especially to my family. This was David Sarnoff, who had but recently come to America to seek his fortune. How well he succeeded is common knowledge. Now, as General Sarnoff, and head of Radio Corporation of America, he likes to come to Nantucket Island every so often and reminisce about those early days. These men appreciated my family's kindness and wanted to pay them a compliment, so they arranged to have the daughter raise the first American Flag on this, the first American wireless station. The ceremonies duly took place on a windy day while the child at the ropes was so small she could do little more than hang onto them, while someone else did the pulling. And by this time the far-away incident is so hazy it could only be verified by an old newspaper clipping.

As more and more messages started coming to this station, from ships at sea as well as from other Marconi stations on the mainland, private messages began to be received also. Since daily papers arrived in Siasconset at least two days late, special arrangements were made for daily bulletins of the score of the NEW YORK GIANTS Baseball Club's games to be sent by wireless to members of the LAMBS CLUB, whose loyalty to this particular baseball team was even a closer bond than their tie to 'Sconset or even to their chosen profession, the theatre. When the message was brought from the brow of the hill to the Ocean View Hotel at the foot of the road, where the actors were gathered in anticipation of the news, if the "GIANTS" had won, great was the rejoicing. But if they had lost, the flag on the lawn of the hotel was put at half-staff for all to see, and gloom spread over the village! A few years later the Marconi Station was moved across the road to a field where two taller poles were erected, and the



whole station was enlarged and improved. Ever since that small beginning in the Cahoon house, Siasconset has been an outpost for wireless communication of some sort. During World War II the important Loran Station was set up at Low Beach Farm area, south of the village, as one of the coastal Long-Range-Navigation-System Headquarters.



Miss Margaret Fawcett raising the colors at opening ceremony of the Marconi Wireless Station, 'Sconset, in 1901.

But to go back to those early days of Marconi's new invention and when discreet summer porch-rocking on verandas of seashore hotels was popular, the center of 'Sconset hotel life was situated opposite the gully, on the way to the railroad station. Part of the main building has been remodeled to the point of non-recognition



and is now a summer home. But at that time it was quite typical of that era, with pointed roof lines and ginger-bread trim. An annex stood nearer the bluff, a large gloomy building looking like a warehouse with a series of long porches. I do not remember ever seeing anyone in a rocking chair on those porches. They were too far away from the center of attraction, the porch and lawn of the main building, the most popular gathering place for all theatre folk to exchange their bits of "Broadway" gossip, — Broadway, New York, as well as Broadway, Siasconset! The proprietor of this hostelry, "Doc" Powers, was a personality in his own right, and not only because he catered so successfully to the personalities of the Stage. Whether the old joke originated with him or not, it was always told that when a lady, accustomed to luxury, requested a "room and bath," he showed her the room and pointed to the ocean for the bath. And I have no doubt if anyone had asked for a shower, he would have pointed to the ceiling, as the rooms were well-known to have many leaks whenever a driving no'th-easter set in. "Doc" Powers, a dentist off-Island during the winter months, had a handle-bar mustache, wore a yachting cap and went around part of the time carrying a bugle under his arm. The occupants of the hotel were awakened by the notes of this bugle each morning, and all distinguished guests were greeted by sonorous bugle salutes on arrival by train at the station, at the foot of the bluff below the Annex. They were also sent on their way back to the Mainland with its dulcet tones in their ears, with "Doc" standing at the head of the flight of wooden steps leading to the station putting his heart into his efforts. With only sand and sea beyond, the notes carried far in the clear air, and with the high bluff giving a haunting resonance, it often gripped throats of listeners of those days, when giving in to sentiment was no disgrace. This was exemplified by the gentleman who had gone to see the train depart, the high point of each day in this languid village. General procedure was that after the whistle on the pint-sized engine went "toot-toot," goodbyes were called back and forth for the last time and then the assembled gathering loudly voiced the popular farewell cheer:

"Paddy-go-wack, go-wack, go-wack!  
Paddy-go-wack, go-wack!  
Wauwinet, Wauwinet!  
Sankaty-light, and 'Sconset!!!"

After that the bugle sounded, while the engine huffed and puffed, clanging its bell as it disappeared around the curve of the bluff on its way to Tom Never's Head and the boat dock in Town. On this occasion "Doc" Powers had given forth with "How Can I Ever Leave Thee," a popular ballad of the day with a melody as touching as its title. When the gentleman in question returned to his room in the hotel, his wife, seeing he was emotionally disturbed, asked what had happened. His answer was, "They've gone." On his wife's inquiring who had departed, his reply was: "I don't remember their names — but, they've gone!" Such was the feeling of melancholy that could grip the heart of even a



strong-minded man when anyone was obliged to leave his beloved retreat. In those untroubled years of the early part of the nineteen hundreds, life was as simple as that and memory of it now seems not quite real.

But change inevitably came. World War I not only jolted the whole Western World out of its naive revery in the late Victorian miasmic area, but it also stirred up and stimulated all sorts of so-called modern progress. After the war was over the automobile spread even to the small island of Nantucket, where formerly none had been allowed because the sputtering machines would "scare the ho'ses"! This increased the pace in almost every activity, and the casualness, so gratifying in 'Sconset life, gradually evaporated. And on the mainland the Moving-Picture industry had a chance now to grow. With no War headlines, they were making headlines in Hollywood and actors were going West. "Hollywood" was the bait where, if you were lucky, you could work all year 'round. My father was one of the fortunate ones. In consequence we remained in the West, not summering in our 'Sconset home for the next ten years. In the East summer theatres began to spring up, giving more actors no excuse for long summer vacations; and then air-conditioning came, and the New York theatres started to stay open during the hot-weather season.

So theatre folk were sifted away from their far-off retreat and 'Sconset's theatrical "Heyday" was over. But the gaiety and glamour of the Stage rubbed off on the village life and left it a little more gleaming, even to this day.



